

INTRODUCTION

Compared to other states, North Carolina allows a wide variety of fishing activities with relatively little regulation. As a result, the Albemarle-Pamlico system is one of the most intensively fished areas on the Atlantic coast. Approximately one million recreational fishermen fish the North Carolina coastal waters annually (DMF data). These fishermen pursue many of the same species as commercial fishermen and often use commercial gear. Use conflicts between commercial and recreational fishermen and between different sectors of commercial fishing seem to be increasing.

The bycatch and waste of non-target organisms is also believed to have a significant impact on important finfish stocks including spot, croaker, weakfish, southern flounder, and summer flounder. This impact is difficult to assess. Fisheries which may present a bycatch problem include the shrimp fishery, menhaden purse seine fishery, the gill net fishery, and the blue crab fishery in the estuarine waters of North Carolina (Skilleter, et. al 1993). It has been shown that shrimp trawls may take from a half pound to over 15 pounds of bycatch for each pound of shrimp caught (McKenna and Clark 1993). For weakfish, population modeling has estimated a significant impact on the stock (Linda Mercer, DMF personal communication). Research conducted by the Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) and UNC Sea Grant College Program has shown that for several fisheries, bycatch is controllable through modifications to fishing gear and practices.

SPECIES	HARVEST STATUS	CONCERNS
ATLANTIC STURGEON	SEVERELY DEPLETED	DISEASE, IMPACTS OF DREDGING ON HABITAT, OVERFISHING
OYSTERS	SEVERELY DEPLETED	BYCATCH, LACK OF INFORMATION FOR MANAGEMENT
ATLANTIC CROAKER	OVER-FISHED	OVERFISHING, BYCATCH
RIVER HERRING	OVER-FISHED	OVERFISHING
STRIPED BASS	OVER-FISHED	OVERFISHING, HYPOXIA, ALGAL BLOOMS, FISH KILLS, USER GROUP CONFLICTS
BAY SCALLOPS	STRESSED	IMPACTS OF HARVESTING ON HABITAT, EARLY OPENING OF SEASON
BLUEFISH	STRESSED	POTENTIAL FOR OVERFISHING
CATFISH	STRESSED	INSUFFICIENT DATA FOR MANAGEMENT
HARD CLAM	STRESSED	POSSIBLE OVERFISHING, HARVEST AREA CLOSURES, USER GROUP CONFLICTS
SPOT	STRESSED	OVERFISHING, BYCATCH
BLUE CRABS	HEALTHY	DISEASE, IMPACTS OF CRAB TRAWLING ON HABITAT, BYCATCH

Table 1 STATUS OF IMPORTANT COMMERCIAL AND RECREATIONAL ESTUARINE SPECIES: APES REGION